

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A method for improving the wear characteristics of a system for operating a variable vane comprising the steps of:

providing a trunnion connected to said variable vane via a vane platform and means for causing rotation of said trunnion; and

positioning a thrust washer formed from a carbon material comprising electrographitic carbon about a lower portion of said trunnion and in a space between said vane platform and an outer split case so that during operation of said system said space between said vane platform and said outer split case is maintained substantially constant and unwanted deflection of said vane is avoided.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising maintaining a generally constant geometry between said vane platform and said outer split case by allowing said thrust washer to degrade so as to lubricate surfaces of said vane platform and said outer split case with graphite.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 further comprising the additional step of operating said system at a temperature of at least 850°F.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 further comprising the additional step of operating said system at a temperature greater than 1050°F.

6. (Currently amended) A system for operating a variable vane in a gas turbine engine comprising:

a vane;

a trunion attached to said vane for rotating said vane; and

means for avoiding unwanted deflection of said vane at operating temperatures, said deflection avoiding means comprises a self lubricating thrust washer comprising electrographitic carbon

surrounding a lower portion of said trunnion.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) A system according to claim 6 further comprising:
said trunnion being connected to said vane via a vane platform;
a split case spaced from said vane platform; and
said thrust washer being positioned between a space between said vane platform and said split case.

10. (Original) A system according to claim 9 wherein said thrust washer decomposes at operating temperatures so as to self lubricate surfaces of said split case and said vane platform.

11. (Original) A system according to claim 9 wherein said thrust washer decomposes at operating temperatures so as to fill in surface voids in surfaces of said split case and said vane platform.

12. (Original) A system according to claim 9, wherein said thrust washer decomposes at operating temperatures so as to maintain the space between said split case and said vane platform and thereby avoid said unwanted deflection of said vane.

13. (New) A system according to claim 9, wherein the thrust washer is capable of operation at a temperature of at least 850°F.

14. (New) A system according to claim 9, wherein the thrust washer is capable of operation at a temperature of at least 1050°F.

15. (New) A system according to claim 6, wherein the thrust washer is capable of operation at

a temperature of at least 850°F.

16. (New) A system according to claim 6, wherein the thrust washer is capable of operation at a temperature of at least 1050°F.

17. (New) A system according to claim 6, wherein the thrust washer self-lubricates at an operational temperature of at least 1050°F by transferring graphite to surfaces of said vane and an outer split case to provide graphite to graphite engagement.